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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 059358

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECIN](#) [ASEAN](#)

SUBJECT: 21ST ASEAN - U.S. DIALOGUE MEETING IN SINGAPORE,
MAY 10

¶1. Summary and introduction. The 21st ASEAN - U.S. Dialogue meeting took place in Singapore on May 10. The U.S. delegation was led by Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs Scot Marciel, who co-chaired the meeting with Peter Ho, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore. The U.S. delegation included officials from State, Treasury and USAID. The discussions covered the full range of developments in U.S. - ASEAN relations. Permanent Secretary Ho and other ASEAN representatives praised "ADVANCE", the program recently launched by the U.S. to support cooperation with ASEAN. The meeting also discussed regional and global issues of common interest. Ambassador Marciel expressed sympathy for the victims of Cyclone Nargis and noted that, notwithstanding U.S. concerns about the constitutional referendum then underway, the American interest in is saving lives not scoring political points. He urged ASEAN to convey to Burmese authorities the urgency of providing access to relief supplies and personnel offered by the international community. End summary and introduction.

¶2. In his welcoming remarks, Permanent Secretary Ho congratulated Ambassador Marciel on his recent confirmation. He called the U.S. a pathfinder in creating this position, and said they hoped other ASEAN Dialogue Partners will follow suit. Other ASEAN senior officials in their interventions throughout the meeting echoed Ho's congratulations and warmly welcomed U.S. leadership in creating the position of Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs. Permanent Secretary Ho also highlighted the new ADVANCE program that supports cooperation between ASEAN and the U.S., the Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA), and cooperation to implement ASEAN's Vientiane Action Program as concrete steps in developing ASEAN - U.S. relations. Ambassador Marciel responded, noting ASEAN's development progress, particularly through the signing of its Charter and the implementation of its political/security, economic and socio/cultural communities. The U.S. is supporting ASEAN's efforts by implementing the Joint Vision Statement on the ASEAN - U.S. Enhanced Partnership announced by the President and ASEAN leaders.

¶3. Developments in ASEAN dominated the discussion of global and regional issues. Permanent Secretary Ho cited the signing of the ASEAN Charter last November as a milestone that will make ASEAN a more rules based organization. By the end of the year the Secretariat in Jakarta will be strengthened and permanent representatives from member countries will be posted there by July 2009. Six of the ten ASEAN member countries have already ratified the Charter, but ASEAN is already working to bring it into effect, for example through the development of an ASEAN human rights body, which he described as a significant step. A high level panel is developing terms of reference and a scope of work for the human rights body, and will report to foreign ministers at their annual meeting in July. Several ASEAN delegations echoed Permanent Secretary Ho's comments. Ambassador Marciel responded the U.S. welcomes the Charter, which we see as having the potential to transform ASEAN into a stronger and more effective organization. Our goal is to be supportive of ASEAN's goals. We also are willing to be supportive of the planned human rights body and we are prepared to provided

technical assistance if desired.

¶4. Indonesia led a discussion of regional architecture and development of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN 3 (ASEAN plus China, Japan and Korea) and the East Asia Summit. ASEAN will continue to play a central role in these groups. ASEAN officials see each of these organizations as having a different footprint and are suited for different issues. They did not see duplication or overlap. Ambassador Marciel said the U.S. welcomed pan-Asian and trans-Pacific regional integration, but we are looking to see how all these groups fit together. Our focus in the region is on APEC and the ARF. EAP/RSP Director Hall also described discussion taking place on a Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism (NEAPSM), followed by a discussion of the status of the Six-Party Talks.

¶5. Developments in the Middle East are a traditional topic at ASEAN Dialogue meetings. Ambassador Marciel described U.S. views of the Middle East peace process, the situation in Iraq and Iran's nuclear program. Malaysia responded, recognizing Israel's security concerns, but criticizing its actions in Gaza as disproportionate and amounting to collective punishment. Malaysia urged that efforts be made to include the Sunnis in the political process in Iraq. Regarding Iran, Malaysia said it supported the right of all countries to produce nuclear technology for peaceful

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purposes.

¶6. ASEAN and U.S. officials discussed their cooperation, including several projects that have been proposed or are underway. ASEAN delegations in particular welcomed the ADVANCE program, funded by the State Department and USAID, as a means of greatly increasing cooperation. Brunei, Laos and Cambodia in particular thanked the United States for its support. The ASEAN Secretariat reviewed the cooperation that is taking place with the U.S. and hoped that cooperation could be increased on disaster management, drugs, and trafficking in persons. Because of serious impact of Cyclone Nargis on Burma, there was extensive discussion of disaster management throughout the meeting. The ASEAN Secretariat invited the U.S. to consider helping to implement Phase II of the Incident Command System training and expressed interest in cooperation on disaster risk reduction. Ambassador Marciel described other highlights of U.S. cooperation with ASEAN, including the beginning of the ASEAN Fulbright Scholars program, work on the environment, particularly the successful Wildlife Enforcement Network, and extensive capacity building on intellectual property rights protection.

Officials discussed the Science and Technology Agreement that is being negotiated by technical officials and agreed on the importance of concluding the agreement in time for it to be signed at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference in Singapore on July 23.

¶7. The Dialogue meeting discussed cooperation on counter terrorism and transnational crime. The Philippines cited the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism that is being implemented and the Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat Terrorism that ASEAN concluded with the United States. ASEAN welcomed work proposed on a rewards program, maritime domain awareness and the consultancy on counter terrorism work in ASEAN supported by the U.S., now completed. Laos asked the U.S. to play a greater role in this area and suggested more consultations between the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime and the United States.

¶8. Private sector business executives join the discussion of economic issues in the annual Dialogue and members of the U.S. - ASEAN Business Council attended the meeting. The President of the Council noted that the private sector provided over \$750 million in assistance after the Indian Ocean tsunami. American businesses were prepared to help again to assist in responding to the crisis caused by Cyclone

Nargis in Burma. Other business comments were on the general need for ASEAN to reduce barriers to trade and investment. The representative from Cargill described the major importance of the food industry in Southeast Asia, noting his company alone has 25,000 direct employees and provide indirect employment for 200,000 others. Trade barriers are a particular difficulty for in the food industry in the ASEAN region. The representative of Johnson and Johnson described the growing healthcare industry and importance of regulatory harmonization across ASEAN member countries and the need for a regional strategy to combat counterfeit medicines. The representative of UPS noted that her company moves 2 per cent of the world's GDP at any given time. Given that volume of trade, the development of the ASEAN Single Window, a customs clearance system that will allow shippers to submit information and data through a single process and decision point, is extremely important.

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